



SIGNIFICANCE OF INFLUENCER MARKETING IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION: CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT:

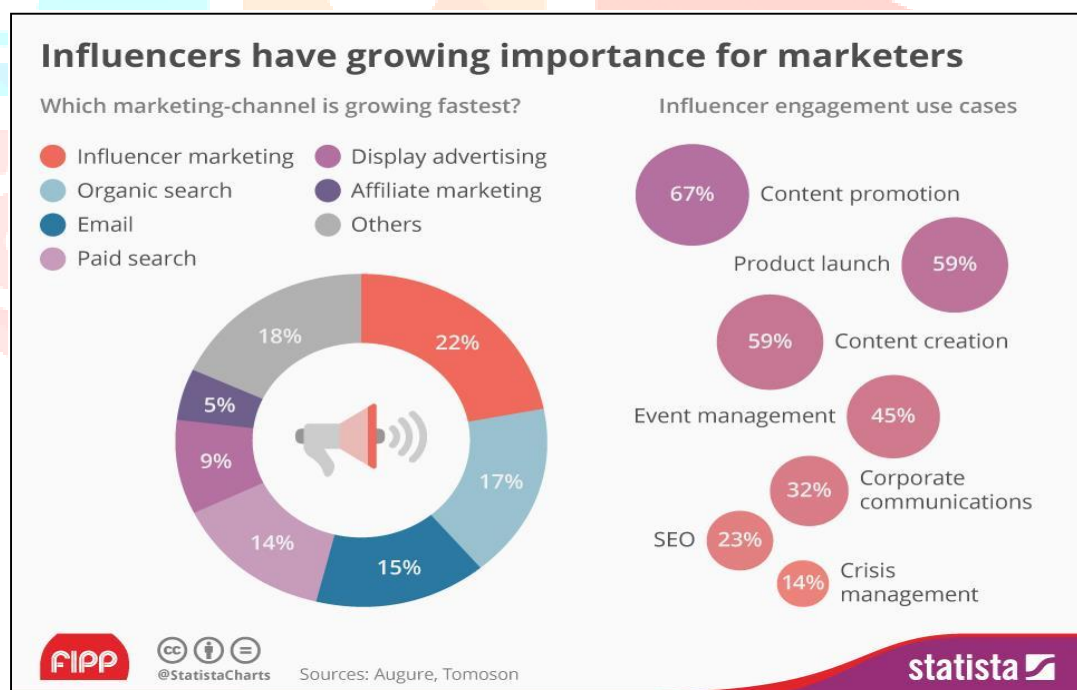
The United Nations has developed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 to promote global development by 2030. In recent years, the idea of sustainability has gained popularity. It is imperative that action must be taken to address the several significant environmental difficulties that the world is currently facing, including pollution, climate change, and the depletion of natural resources. SDG 12 promotes sustainable business practices, responsible consumption, sustainable tourism, etc. Social media platforms are useful for promoting sustainability. Influencer marketing a type of social media marketing can be used to encourage ecologically conscious behaviour and sustainable consumerism. People are more active on social media platforms, so it is easy to communicate with them on the Internet. The aim of the research is to study the relationship between influencer marketing and sustainable consumption and also to understand the role of influencer marketing in promoting sustainability. It also examines how social media posts regarding green consumption, sustainable travel, zero-wasting, etc. promote sustainable lifestyles. The study is based on secondary data various research papers have been reviewed and analyzed to understand the concept. Data has been collected from journals, books, media reports, blogs, government websites, internet, etc. Influencer marketing is being used by a number of industries, including food, travel, fashion, lifestyle, and tourism, to promote sustainability on social media. The results show that influencer marketing can be a useful technique for raising awareness and promoting sustainable living and making sustainable choices.

KEYWORDS – Sustainable Development Goals, Sustainability, Instagram, Influencer marketing, Sustainable consumption pattern

INTRODUCTION

Today, the world is struggling with many environmental issues like pollution, climate change, waste disposal, the depletion of natural resources, etc. In such a situation, the idea of sustainability plays an important role. Sustainable consumption and production practices have been emphasized as a key strategy for achieving sustainability. Nowadays many individuals and businesses are promoting these practices. One of the important ways that SCP practices can be promoted is through the use of social media, which has become a common platform for communication and advertising. (Islam et al., 2023) Social media forced companies to show up in places where people can connect and exchange information. (De Leo et al., 2016). Due to the continuous use of social media platforms (Youtube, Facebook, Instagram), the attitude of people have changed, with the help of smartphones people can search the needed information on the web like a tourist destination, restaurants, food, fashion, etc. technology has changed consumers' buying behaviour.

Influencer marketing is a subcategory of digital marketing in which a brand collaborates with a well-known influencer to promote their brand and build credibility for the target audience. The message is sent indirectly through the influencers to the audience. They use blogs, tweets, videos and other digital contents to influence audience sentiments. People believe influencers to be genuine and trustworthy. As a result, their opinions are considered reliable and credible by their followers. (Freberg et al., 2011) When influencers introduce and advertise any product on their platform it increases brand awareness and sales. Social media influencers are experts in their field followers trust them and make their buying decisions based on their recommendations. Corporations use influencers to promote their brands. People who build a large base of followers on social media are called content creators or influencers. Today, influencer marketing is related to every field whether it is about fashion, food, travel, lifestyle, electronics, etc. Influencers related to every niche market are available on all social media platforms.



Source: Statista

According to the Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report: 2023, Influencer marketing's market size is predicted to reach \$16.4 billion in 2022, up from just \$1.7 billion when this website first launched in 2016. Furthermore, this is projected to increase by an additional 29% in 2023, reaching an estimated \$21.1 billion. As of 2022, the influencer marketing industry in India was valued at over 12 billion Indian rupees (Statista). As Influencer marketing is a growing concept it is used to promote eco-friendly goods and sustainable business practices.

Sustainable Consumption and Production (SDG-12) is one of the major goals out of 17 SDGs. The SDGs agenda stimulates action on five key themes: “people, planet, peace, prosperity, and partnership” (United Nations, 2015). To focus on sustainable development, global business leaders are showing deep concerns about sustainable business practices. Global consumers are increasingly aware of the

environmental impact of industrialization and their responsibility to contribute to it through sustainable product consumption (Bagdare, 2018). With the help of marketing communication techniques like Influencer Marketing, marketers can create awareness about sustainable consumption practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jalali, S. S., & Khalid, H. (2019) in their research paper studied about the effect of influencers' activity on green consumer behaviour. Social media, especially Instagram, is important for spreading awareness and encouraging eco-friendly conduct. According to the study some factors like Instagram influencers' photo content, GWOM, green concern affects followers' green attitude and consumption intention.

Kaulbars-Staudinger, E. (2019) analyzed how influencer marketing affects consumer online behaviour and consumer purchase decision. Brands use influencer's services for promotional purpose. However, genuine influencers with personal personalities and opinions are more likely to sustain their business. People follow these influencers based on their valuable content, including product information and product reviews.

Wielki, J. (2020) in his research paper investigated about the role of Digital Influencers and their impact on online promotional system and on sustainable development. Digital influencers are playing an increasingly important role in modern organizations' promotional strategies and are revolutionizing the way the online promotional ecosystem works. Digital influencers are categorized by followers, motivation, communication platforms, and activity type. Their effectiveness depends on trust, message credibility, and connection. Digital influencer activities may replace digital advertising in the future.

Yalcin, T., Nistor, C., & Pehlivan, E. (2020) their study is related with the role of sustainability influencers. With over 4 million Instagram posts about #zerowaste, people are showing their support for reducing their waste and conserving resources. Sustainability-focused eco-influencers have a dual responsibility of producing content to educate consumers while also promoting sustainable, eco-friendly products.

Yildirim, S. (2021) explained the role of green women influencers in promoting sustainable consumption patterns. In general, Women are primary influencers they have power to promote sustainable consumption patterns via social media platforms. They share content like sustainable fashion, green food, sustainable tourism, zero waste life, etc. to promote sustainability. Green women social media influencers can be effective endorsers for sustainable development by volunteering to share sustainable and green digital content.

Liu, M. (2022) studied the impact of celebrity on the consumer's impulse buying behavior and purchase intent. The study concluded that the qualities associated with celebrity (i.e. credibility, attractiveness, and expertise) had a positive effect on impulsive buying tendencies and purchase intent.

Xie, S., & Madni, G. R. (2023) they examined the influence of social media usage on the green purchasing intentions of young individuals in the context of subjective norms and perceived green value. According to the study social media positively impacts the younger generation. Consumer having strong perceived green values and subjective norms for sharing environmental information on social media are more willing to adopt green consumption.

This paper studies the role of Influencer marketing in creating awareness about sustainable consumption. It also focuses on how different Industries like tourism, food, fashion, lifestyle, etc. promote sustainability with the use of influencer marketing. The paper presents different examples from Instagram to show the growing concept of influencer marketing for sustainability.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the relationship between influencer marketing and sustainable consumption patterns.
2. To understand key industries using influencer marketing to promote sustainability.
3. To study the benefits of using sustainable influencer marketing

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is Descriptive in nature. It is based on secondary data various research papers of similar types have been referred to understand the relationship between influencer marketing and sustainable consumption. Data has been collected from Articles, Internet, Media reports, Blogs, Journals, Books, Government websites.

DISCUSSION

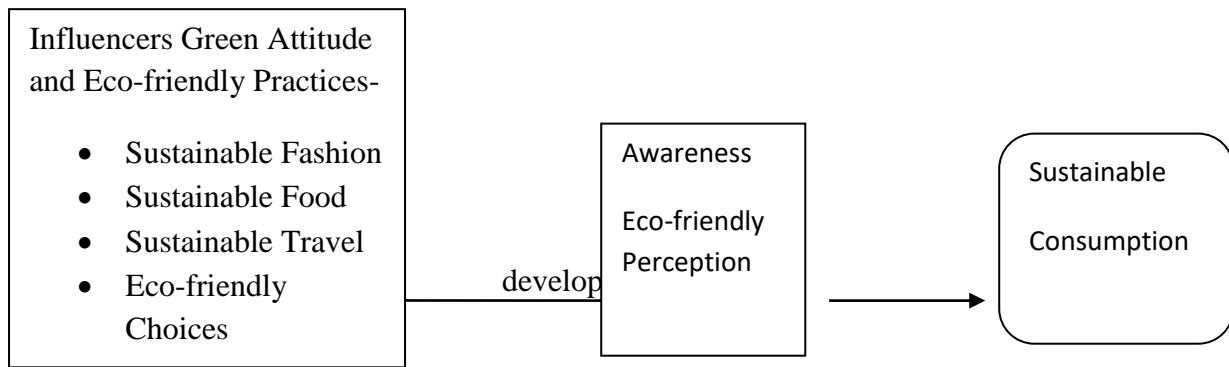
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INFLUENCER MARKETING AND SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Sustainable influencer marketing is becoming increasingly popular in the marketing landscape as the world moves towards a more sustainable lifestyle. By leveraging the right talent and effective talent management, influencer marketing can influence consumer behaviour towards sustainability. With the help of influencer marketing brands can reach a wider audience and inspire them to make environment-friendly choices. On social media sites (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, etc.) influencers can share photos, videos or other content to promote products and services. Influencers' environmental awareness and commitment to protecting the planet can have a significant impact on the green attitude of their followers. In other words, the level of engagement the influencer has with environmental issues and planet protection can have a positive effect on their desire to engage in environmentally conscious behaviour. (Jalali & Khalid, 2021)

Ciasullo et al., (2017) have examined the impact of sustainability on consumer buying behaviour and proposed a theoretical framework by integrating "Importance", "expectations" and "social influence". Consumer expectations and social influence appear to be influential factors in consumers' willingness to purchase sustainable clothing. Where price plays an important customers will not pay more than 20% for sustainable clothing. Bagdare, (2018) has developed a fourfold conceptual model which includes – Sensitize, Familiarize, Incentivize and Recognize. Consumer is an integral part of sustainable development, their awareness, perceptions, attitudes, choices and actions towards sustainability will contribute to a more widespread adoption of eco-friendly practices and products or services.

Green women influencer mainly micro influencers, share the primary content of sustainable fashion, sustainable food, sustainable lifestyle, and green cosmetics to encourage sustainable consumption. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, and LinkedIn, which are highly skilled and informative, offer open access information, and have a large number of followers, are the primary tools used to lead people towards sustainable consumption patterns. (Yıldırım, 2021) Influencer marketing is one of the most effective ways to promote sustainable products and increase eco-friendly consumer demand. (Jacobson & Harrison, 2021)

On the basis of relevant literature, it can be concluded that Influencer marketing emerged as an innovative technique to promote eco-friendly practices and consumption patterns. Influencers can use social media platforms to share their green skills and environmental information and to promote sustainable consumption patterns like- sustainable fashion, sustainable food, sustainable lifestyle, sustainable travel, eco-friendly choices, zero waste life, etc. These practices will help in developing awareness and eco-friendly perception which will promote sustainable consumption.



Source: Author's compilation

KEY INDUSTRIES USING INFLUENCER MARKETING TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability has been a hot topic all year. People are more conscious than ever of the environmental impact of their current lifestyle choices. All other businesses are emphasizing their 'green' and 'sustainable' initiatives. Influencer marketing has played a significant role in achieving this goal.

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL - The UN report "A Net Zero Roadmap for Travel and Tourism," reveals that 83% of global travelers consider sustainable travel vital, 69% expect sustainable options, and 61% desire future sustainable travel due to pandemic impact. Due to climate change, pollution, pandemic there is huge impact on travel and tourism. Travel influencers promote responsible travel practices among their followers through the sharing of authentic experiences. By partnering with the company, they can increase the visibility of sustainability initiatives. So it can lead to brand recognition and exposure that can attract eco-minded travelers. Some Instagram posts by influencers have been presented as examples where switching off unused lights and using refillable bottles are promoted.

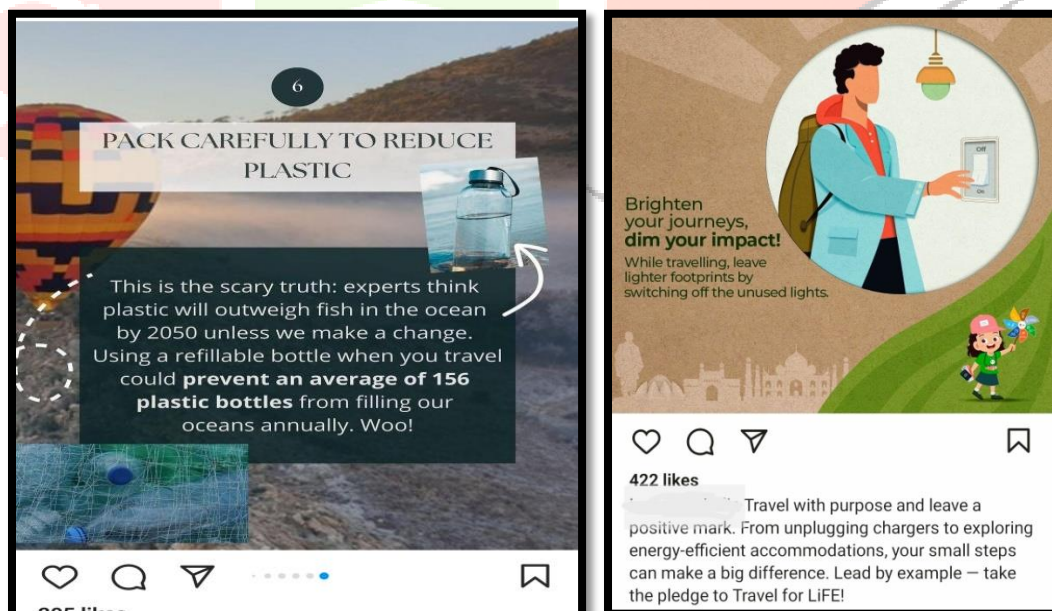


Figure 1: Posts related to sustainable travel (Source: Instagram)

SUSTAINABLE FASHION- Sustainable fashion is the practice of producing fashion items in a manner that minimizes environmental impact and encourages social responsibility across the entire manufacturing process. The aim of sustainable fashion is to produce fashion items that are eco-friendly, socially conscious, and cost-effective. It means utilizing natural and organic materials that are grown and harvested without the use of harmful pesticides and chemicals, including wool, linen and cotton. Many retailers, including H&M, Zara, and others, have already implemented clothing recycling initiatives and environmentally conscious collections. H&M, for example, has committed to transitioning to 100% sustainably sourced fabrics by 2025. Influencers promote sustainable fashion on various social media

platforms. For example Liva brand is promoting plant based fabrics with the help of influencer and another example is related with handmade clothing.



Figure 2: Post shared by influencer promoting handmade clothing (Source: Instagram)

SUSTAINABLE FOOD - Social Media Influencer Marketing is one of the most popular ways to encourage people to buy sustainable food. A sustainable food system begins with sustainable agricultural practices, food distribution systems that are more sustainable, sustainable diet, and no food waste. Social media is used from promoting healthy, organic and plant based foods.

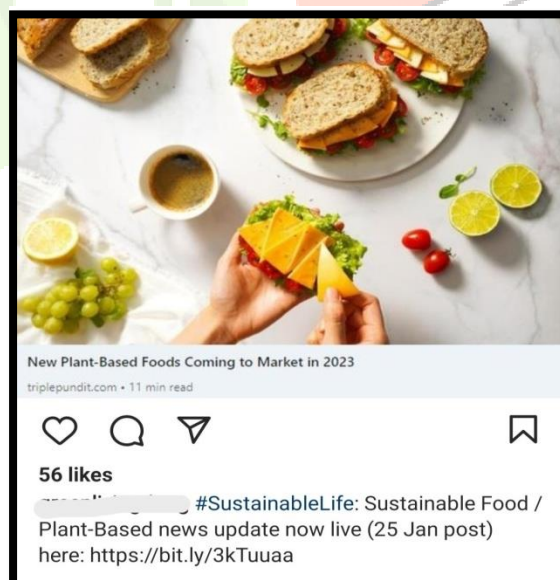


Figure 3: Photo shared by influencer promoting sustainable food (Source: Instagram)

SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE- Sustainable lifestyle promotes living zero-waste and environment friendly life. Influencers who focus on minimalism and zero waste are helping people live more responsibly in their day-to-day lives. They promote reusable bags, home-made cleaner, handloom, using eco- fabrics, compost from wasted food, etc.

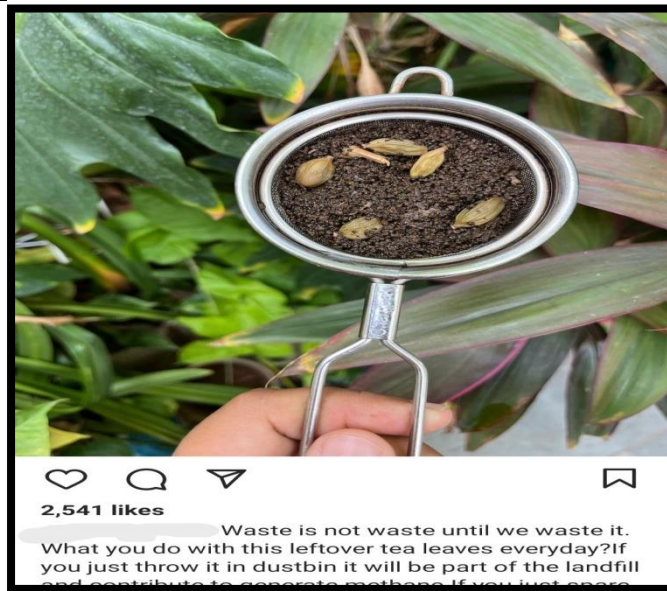


Figure: 4 Image shared by influencer regarding using waste food for compost (Source: Instagram)

Industries like Fashion, Food, Travel, Cosmetics, etc. use influencer marketing techniques. In this section of the paper with the help of the above-mentioned examples taken from the social media platform- “Instagram”, the researcher attempts to highlight the importance of Influencer marketing in promoting sustainability. Many brands, like Patagonia (a clothing brand), use influencers to promote their eco-friendly practices. Brands also use influencer marketing campaigns to promote sustainability. For example, Adidas (a sportswear company) launched "Run for the Oceans," a campaign to raise funds for ocean conservation, and Unilever (a consumer goods company) launched "Project Sunlight," a campaign to promote sustainable living practices.

BENEFITS OF USING SUSTAINABLE INFLUENCER MARKETING

- **Increase Awareness-** Sustainable influencer marketing is an effective way to increase consumer awareness about the environmental impact. By collaborating with influencers who share a passion for sustainability, brands can expand their reach and educate consumers how to make more environmentally conscious decisions.

- **Encourage Action** - Sustainable influencer marketing isn't just about raising awareness, it's also about inspiring people to take action. When influencers promote sustainable products and best practices, they're encouraging their followers to do the same.

- **Authentic Information-** Consumers demand genuine communication from both brands and influencers when it comes to sustainability. They want to hear from a brand or influencer that is truly committed to sustainability, rather than simply green-washing. Through sustainable influencer marketing, brands and influencers can communicate a more authentic message to consumers.

- **Positive Brand Image-** Sustainable influencers are seen as more credible and responsible than traditional influencers. By aligning with these influencers' values, brands can strengthen their brand image.

- **Impact on Consumer Behaviour-** Influencers can use their influence to promote products and services that are more environmentally friendly, which can have a positive effect on consumer behavior.

- **Provide Sustainable choices-** Influencer marketing has the potential to provide consumers with sustainable solutions. Partnering with brands that provide sustainable products or services allows influencers to promote new sustainable alternatives that their followers may not have been aware of.

- **Successful campaigns** - Finding influencers who match your brand's values and are committed to sustainability can be tough, but it's a must for your campaign to succeed. With the help of influencers, brands can launch sustainable influencer marketing campaigns to inspire consumers to make small changes to protect the environment.

• **Increase Sales-** In a world where sustainable consumer behaviour is becoming more and more of a priority for consumers around the world, sustainable product and service offerings can help to bring in new customers and boost sales.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable consumption and production practices have been emphasized as a key strategy for achieving sustainability. The combination of social media with sustainable practices opens the door for responsible consumption and accelerates social transformation. Influencer marketing has emerged as the most effective method for promoting sustainable practices. Consumer is an important part of sustainable development their actions play a vital role in keeping the planet green and safe for future generation. Social media is where consumers spend their most time and Influencer marketing as part of social media can influence consumer behaviour and promote eco-friendly practices.


The study shows that Influencer marketing emerged as an innovative technique to promote eco-friendly practices and consumption patterns. Influencers can use social media platforms to share their green skills and environmental information and to promote sustainable consumption patterns like-sustainable fashion, sustainable food, sustainable lifestyle, sustainable travel, eco-friendly choices, zero waste life, etc. This will help in developing awareness, eco-friendly perception, and sustainable consumption.

The study also concludes that key industries like Travel, Fashion, Food, and Lifestyle-related products use influencer marketing to promote brands and their sustainability initiatives. Instagram posts and reels shared by influencers have been used as examples to show how industries and brands work with influencers. With the help of posts, blogs, videos, reels, etc. influencers promote practices like refillable bottles, fly less, use of plant-based fabric and homemade clothing, organic food consumption, handloom, compost from wasted food, etc. Many brands like Adidas, Unilever, Lush etc launch sustainable influencer marketing campaigns.

An influencer marketing technique is very beneficial as it creates awareness, inspires people to take action, provides authentic information, promotes sustainable consumer behaviour, increases sales, and builds a positive image of brands. Influencer marketing is a new tool for promoting sustainability.

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